SUNDAY READING.

THE STORY OF JOSEPH AND HIS BRETHREN.

PART II.

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The STORY, &c.

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POOR unhappy Joſeph! we left him in priſon where I think he muſt have had a very anxious time, for who could tell whether it might not be his turn next to be taken out and hanged as the chief baker was! and yet perhaps there might be ſome ray of hope that he might like the chief butler, get out and go back to his office. All ſuch hopes however ſoon vaniſhed, for though Pharaoh's birth-day came, "on which he made a feaſt to all his ſervants," yet it proved no holiday to Joſeph; and though the chief butler got ſettled in his chief butlerſhip again, and was giving the cup every day into King Pharaoh's hand, yet did not the chief butler remem-

ber Joseph." Two whole years passed without any improvement in this poor prisoner's condition: now in all this time it seems very strange that the chief butler should not have contrived to drop a word in his favour; for how wonderfully had Joseph foretold to the chief butler his restoration to office! how affectingly too had he intreated to be remembered by him when the day of his prosperity should come! I cannot help here repeating the parting words of Joseph, for they are very remarkable. "But think of me," says he, "when it shall be well with thee, and shew kindness I pray thee unto me, and make mention of me to Pharaoh, and bring me out of this house; for indeed I was stolen away out of the land of the Hebrews, and here also I have done nothing that that they should put me into the dungeon.—Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph."

Ah! how just a picture is this of a great part of mankind! we are many of us apt, while we are faring well ourselves to take no thought about those who are

poor and ſick and in priſon. It pleaſes God now and then to let one or other of us riſe up in the world, upon which we go away and forget all our old companions, ſome of whom perhaps moſt exceedingly need a helping hand from us; we are grown gay and merry, or buſily engaged among our new friends, ſo that we quite forget our old ones; and then as to any intereſt which we have got with the great, we feel ſo much in awe of thoſe above us, we are ſo ſoft and ſmooth and civil when we are in their preſence, and ſo unwilling to ſay any thing which may poſſibly give offence, or that may chance to hurt our own intereſt, that we dare not ſpeak a word in favour even of the moſt injured character, but we diſmiſs him from our thoughts, juſt as the chief butler diſmiſſed Joſeph from his remembrance.

"It came to paſs however, at the end of two full years, that King Pharaoh dreamed a dream—and behold there came up out of the river ſeven well favoured kine, and fat fleſhed, and they fed in a meadow. And behold ſeven

other kine came up after them ill favoured and lean fleshed, and did eat up the seven well favoured and fat kine. And Pharaoh dreamed the second time, and behold seven ears of corn came up upon one stalk strong and good. And seven thin ears sprung up after them. And the seven thin ears devoured the seven strong and full ears. And Pharaoh awoke and behold it was a dream."

And now what is to be done! the King himself is troubled with a dream. "And it came to pass," says the Scripture, "that in the morning the King's spirit was troubled: and he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt, and all the wise men thereof, and Pharaoh told them his dreams; but there was none that could interpret them to Pharaoh." And no wonder, for it was the purpose of God to confound by this dream all the magicians of Egypt, in order that the King might be driven to ask an interpretation of it from Joseph.

"And then came the chief butler and ſpake unto king Pharaoh, ſaying, I do remember my faults this day; for Pharaoh was wroth with his ſervants, and put me in ward in the captain of the guard's houſe, both me and the chief baker: and we dreamed a dream in one night, I and he. And there was there with us a young Hebrew, ſervant of the captain of the guard, and we told him and he interpreted to us our dreams. And it came to paſs as he interpreted, ſo it was: me he reſtored unto mine office, and him he hanged."

What joyful intelligence was this to Pharaoh. Methinks I ſee his countenance brighten up at once upon it. "Then Pharaoh ſent and called Joſeph, and they brought him haſtily out of the dungeon. And he ſhaved himſelf and changed his raiment, and came in unto Pharaoh." When this great eaſtern King commands, not a moment is to be loſt in obeying him. For two long years had Joſeph been made to wait in priſon for his deliverance, but Pharaoh would hardly wait two minutes before Joſeph,

whose appearance had become quite forlorn and wretched, must be brought before him shaved and dressed, and fit for the royal presence.

"And immediately Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I have dreamed a dream, and there is none that can interpret it; and I have heard say of thee that thou canst understand a dream to interpret it."

Pharaoh seems not yet to have understood by whose help it was that Joseph was enabled to interpret dreams. Joseph had no more skill in these matters than any other man, but he was the servant of God, and it pleased God for his own purposes to give to Joseph by miracle the power of interpreting the dream of Pharaoh. Accordingly Joseph answers Pharaoh by saying "it is not in me, God shall give to Pharaoh an answer of peace." Thus Joseph takes none of the glory to himself, as a proud person would have been glad to do, but he gives it all to God, to whom alone it was due. Pharaoh then in a very exact

manner relates his two dreams to Joseph.

"And Joseph said unto Pharaoh, the dream is one," that is to say, the two dreams signify one and the same thing, "and God hath shewed Pharaoh by means of them what he is about to do." The seven good kine are seven years, and so also the seven good ears of corn are seven years, the dream is one. And the seven thin and ill favoured kine that came up after them are seven years, and the seven empty ears of corn are also seven years, and these last signify seven years of famine. This therefore is the thing which God is about to do; behold there come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt, and there shall arise after them seven years of famine, and the plenty shall not be known in the land by reason of the famine following, for it shall be very grievous. Now therefore, continued Joseph, let Pharaoh look out a man discreet and wise and set him over the land of Egypt, and let him appoint officers, and let them gather together

the food of the good years and lay it up in the cities, and it ſhall be for ſtore againſt the ſeven years of famine, in order that the land may not periſh. And the thing which Joſeph ſaid ſeemed good in the eyes of Pharaoh and of his ſervants, and Pharaoh ſaid unto his ſervants, can we find any one equal to this Joſeph, a man in whom the ſpirit of God is? and Pharaoh ſaid unto Joſeph, foraſmuch as God hath ſhewed thee all this, thou ſhalt therefore be over my houſe, and according to thy word ſhall all my people be ruled; only in the throne will I be greater than thou; and Pharaoh took off the ring from his hand and put it on Joſeph's hand, and arrayed him in veſtments of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck, and made him to ride in the ſecond chariot that he had, and they cried before him bow the knee! and he made him ruler over all the land of Egypt. And Pharaoh ſaid unto Joſeph, I am Pharaoh, and without me ſhall no man lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt."

How wonderful was this exaltation of Joseph! he is now greater than ever he was. He had before been first man in the house of Pharaoh's chief captain, but he is now the first man in the house of Pharaoh himself; he is greater than Potiphar his own former master, he is the first person next to Pharaoh in all the kingdom of Egypt. But let us not forget to admire the good providence of God in all this. It was God that raised him from being a slave to be the chief servant of Potiphar, and it was God that lifted him up from being a prisoner, to be ruler of all Egypt. "For it is the Lord (as the Psalmist says) that maketh rich, and maketh poor, that lifteth up, and casteth down. He taketh the simple out of the dust, and lifteth the poor out of the mire, that he may set him with the princes, even with the princes of the people." "For the Lord is merciful to them that fear him," and "he will keep the way of the saints." It is true he sometimes afflicts even his most favoured people; "He brings down, as it is said, their heart through heaviness, they fall down, and there is none to help them:" "He also suffers them

to be evilly entreated through tyrants." But at length he "brings them out of darkneſs and out of the ſhadow of death, and breaks their bonds in ſunder." "He leads them by a way which they know not, he maketh darkneſs light before them, and crooked things ſtraight," and thus, "though heavineſs may endure for a night, yet joy cometh in the morning."

"O Praiſe the Lord then ye ſervants of his! O praiſe the name of the Lord! bleſſed be the name of the Lord from this time forth for evermore!" "For he preſerveth the way of his ſaints, and hath been ever mindful of his covenant." He ſaved Noah from the waters of the flood, he brought forth righteous Lot out of Sodom, he preſerved Shadrach and his companions in the fiery furnace, and Daniel in the lion's den. He "delivered David his ſervant from the peril of the ſword." "He ſhewed alſo his ways unto Moſes, and his works unto the children of Iſrael." "He alſo cauſed a dearth in the land of Egypt, and deſtroyed the proviſion of bread. But

he ſent a man before, even Joſeph, who was ſold for a ſervant, whoſe feet they hurt in the ſtocks; the iron entered into his ſoul—until the time came that his cauſe was heard. Then the king ſent and delivered him; the prince of the people let him go free, he made him Lord alſo of his houſe and ruler of all his ſubſtance."

But let not any of my readers ſuppoſe that Joſeph is now to be admired merely for his greatneſs, and that the ring on his finger, and the fine veſtment on his back, and the grand chariot in which he rode, were the chief things he was pleaſed with. Joſeph was a great man undoubtedly, but he was as good as he was great, and indeed what is all earthly greatneſs unleſs goodneſs is joined with it. It is a great ſin in my opinion to wiſh to be a prime miniſter or a king for the mere honour of it, and I would rather be a poor labourer that is of ſome uſe in the world, than be the greateſt Monarch in Europe, unleſs I could do ſome ſpecial ſervice by my greatneſs.

Joseph proceeds directly to make himself very useful in his new station; "for he immediately went out from the presence of Pharaoh and travelled throughout the land, and in the seven plenteous years the earth brought forth by handfuls, and he gathered up all the food of the seven years, and the food of the field which was round about every city laid he up in the same, and he gathered corn as the sand of the sea, very much, until he left numbering. And after the seven years of plenteousness were ended, them the seven years of dearth began to come according as Joseph had said. And the people of Egypt cried unto Pharaoh for bread; and Pharaoh said unto them, Go unto Joseph, and Joseph opened the storehouses, and sold unto the Egyptians."

I am afraid that my readers have by this time almost forgot old Jacob, the father of Joseph, and his eleven sons, who were living with him in the land of Canaan, at some distance from Egypt. The famine of the last seven years was such as to be severely felt even in their

country. "Then Jacob ſaid unto his ſons whoſe countenances were all caſt down on the occaſion, Why do ye look one upon another, behold I have heard that there is corn in Egypt. Get you down thither and buy for us from thence that we may live and not die. And Joſeph's ten brethren went down accordingly to Egypt." But Benjamin being now the father's favourite, was not ſuffered to go with them, for old Jacob ſaid, "Peradventure ſome miſchief will befall him."

"And when the ſons of Jacob arrived, Joſeph was the governor of the land, and he it was that ſold to all the people. And Joſeph's brethren came and bowed themſelves down before him with their faces towards the earth."

Oh! what a change of ſcene! Theſe are the men who the laſt time they ſaw Joſeph, had ſaid of him, "Behold this dreamer cometh," They had then put him into the pit, and had ſold him for a ſlave; becauſe he had foretold, that theſe his brethren, and his parents (who

were ſignified by the ſun, moon, and ſtars,) ſhould one day bow down before him. How wonderfully does God accompliſh his own purpoſes. The very means which we take to defeat them are ſometimes made uſe of by God, in order to bring them about. Joſeph's brethren thought that by ſelling him for a ſlave, they ſhould prevent their ever having to bow down before him; and yet by this act of theirs, that very prophecy was brought to paſs. In like manner the Jews thought that by putting Chriſt to death, they ſhould defeat the ends of his coming into the world, and ſhould make void the prophecies concerning Chriſt: whereas his death itſelf was the fulfilment of prophecy, and was one chief purpoſe of his entering into the world; for thereby he made atonement for the ſins of men.

Let no one then preſume to think that he can direct events in his own way; or that he can either by art or power prevail againſt God, for the counſel of the Lord, it ſhall ſtand, and he will bring it to paſs. "The Lord ta-

keth the wise in his own craftiness;" he ordereth all things in Heaven above and in the earth beneath." "Go to now, ye that say, to-day or to-morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell and get gain: whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow, or that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live and do this or that."

Joseph's brethren, while they were bowing down, did not know Joseph, for he made himself strange unto them, and spake roughly, saying, "Ye are spies! to see the nakedness of the land you are come." And they said, Nay, my Lord but to buy food are we come. We are twelve brethren from the land of Canaan, and behold the youngest is this day with our father, and one is not. And Joseph said again, Ye are spies!" and then added, "but hereby shall ye be proved whether there be truth in you. One of you shall go and fetch his brother, while the rest shall be kept in prison, and he kept them all in ward three days." Joseph, however, after

this lets them all depart, one only excepted; and he gives them corn in their bags to carry home, bidding them all to come again and redeem the brother they had left behind, by bringing the next time their youngeſt brother Benjamin. Now all this ſeems to have been done by Joſeph for the purpoſe of collecting every one of his brethren round him before he would diſcover himſelf to them, and perhaps he was led to practiſe rather too much art by his anxiety to ſee them gathered together.

Then ſaid Joſeph's brethren one to another, "We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we ſaw the anguiſh of his ſoul, when he beſought us, and we would not hear? therefore behold alſo his blood is required of us."

Oh! how dreadful is a guilty conſcience! It will cauſe our ſins to haunt us years after they have been committed.

Now have none of my readers ever felt the like kind of terror in conſe-

quence of their having done something amiss. After the commission of a crime did you never fancy that every one you met observed you, and that every common accident was a judgment of God upon you, and if any trouble happen to befal you a long time afterwards, have you not been apt immediately to imagine that it had some connection with your former guilt? Sin does not always leave this sting behind it, for some people are quite hardened by their crimes, nevertheless it often does. If the sin be great and dreadful, if it be something particular and extraordinary, like the selling of a brother, or the thought of putting him to death, then, though years should pass away quietly, yet it is probable that conscience will awake and cry out against us at last.

In the present case, it appears to me that Joseph's brethren had no particular reason to suppose that the trouble they dreaded was caused by their having formerly sold their brother Joseph. They seem not to have argued very

correctly on the occaſion; "We ſaw, ſaid they, the anguiſh of his ſoul and we would not hear, and therefore now is his blood about to be required of us."—But this was not a very ſound way of reaſoning; for it was not clear that his blood was now going to be required of them at all. It was not clear that any trouble whatever was about to happen to them, and even if ſome trouble ſhould happen to them: their having once ſold their brother might not be the cauſe. Guilt is fearful. A man that has ſome undiſcovered crime within him is apt to feel unreaſonable frights and fears; his imagination becomes diſturbed; he grows ſuſpicious beyond all reaſon; he ſees an enemy perhaps, as Joſeph's brethren did, in his beſt friend, and the very things that are for him, if they happen to go awkardly for a day or two, are thought to be moſt dreadfully againſt him. In ſhort, a perſon whoſe conſcience has become burthened with ſome great ſin has often no comfort in his life, until he has fairly confeſſed it and repented of it.

No ſooner had Joſeph's brethren expreſſed their fright than Reuben lifts up his voice, and obſerves to them how "he had intreated them not to hurt their brother, and they would not hear. Therefore alſo ſays he is his blood required of us." Here again we may diſcern a picture of what often happens among thoſe who have been partners in iniquity. When the time of trouble comes, then thoſe who have had leſs hand in the guilt begin to reproach the others for having been principals in the buſineſs. Like Reuben they begin to juſtify themſelves, and ſay; Did not I tell you at the time to take care what you did, but you would not mind me, and therefore now you have brought down all this trouble on yourſelves, and not on yourſelves only, but on me alſo. Nothing is more common than for thoſe who were all more or leſs joined in the ſame crime, to fall out and reproach one another for it afterwards.

Joſeph overheard all this converſation among his brethren, and he turned himſelf about from them and wept, and

returned to them again, and communed, (or had converſation, by means of an interpreter,) with them, and took from them Simeon, and bound him before their eyes. Joſeph then commanded that their ſacks ſhould be laden with corn, and that every man's money ſhould be reſtored into his ſack, which being done they departed; and as one of them opened his ſack to give his aſs food at the inn, he eſpied his money; for behold it was in his ſack's mouth. And when he told it his brethren, all their hearts failed them, and they ſaid one to another. "What is this that God hath done unto us." Here again, their diſpoſition to take fright ſeems to have ſhewn itſelf. I ſuppoſe they now thought that ſome judgment of God would fall upon them in their way home, on account of the ſame ſin of ſelling Joſeph.

And they came unto Jacob their father, and told him all that had befallen them, ſaying: "The man who is the lord of the land ſpake roughly to us, and took us for ſpies: we ſaid unto

him, "We are true men, we are no no ſpies, we be twelve brethren." Methinks it would be ſome relief to Joſeph's brethren to tell their father how harſhly they had been ſpoken to, and how unjuſtly they had been ſuſpected when they were in Egypt; for whenever a man has ſome great and real ſin on his mind, he is glad to turn to any thing right, or innocent in his conduct, in which, nevertheleſs, he has been accuſed of ſinning. Jacob's ſons had uſed their father ill in ſelling Joſeph, but they themſelves had been uſed ill on the old man's account, when they went to buy corn for him in Egypt. It would be a comfort therefore to talk to him of what they had ſuffered for his ſake, ſince it would ſeem to make amends in ſome meaſure for the ill of which they were conſcious of having done him.

Let us beware however of diſguiſing our guilt, by dwelling on ſome ſmaller point in which it may be true that we are innocent. To do ſo is one of the common ſhifts of wicked men, and

there are none so wicked as not to have some part of their conduct on which they can dwell with pleasure, and self-complacency.

But when Joseph's brethren proceeded to explain to their father, how the Lord of the country had commanded them to bring to him their brother Benjamin, and how he had detained Simeon as a pledge or hostage on his account, then Jacob in the bitterness of his heart, exclaimed, "Me have ye bereaved of my children, Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away, all these things are against me." Had Reuben now come up and declared that if Benjamin might but go with them, he would pledge the lives of his own two infant children, that Benjamin should be brought back in safety, Jacob said, my son shall not go down with you, for his brother Joseph is already dead, and if mischief befal Benjamin also by the way, then shall ye bring my grey hairs with sorrow to the grave."

"All these things are against me," said good old Jacob, when he was told of what had happened to his sons in Egypt; for we may remember they had been obliged by Joseph to leave their brother Simeon behind them, and had even been required to bring Benjamin also. On hearing this, old Jacob cried out, "Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take away Benjamin: all these things are against me."

Ah! how little did Jacob know of the real nature of those events which were befalling him! The very things which he said were against him, in fact were making for him, for they led the way to the recovery of his son Joseph who had been lost, and also to Jacob's removal, with all his family, into the plentiful land of Egypt. I do not wonder, indeed, that this poor old man, bowed down as he now was with age and infirmity, and deprived, as he had been, first of one dear son, and then of another, should be unwilling to let his present favourite Benjamin be carried off into Egypt. And yet, what could he do? The famine

now again grew very sore in the land, and at last, when all the corn from Egypt was eaten up, even Jacob himself is represented as asking his sons to go again and buy a little food.

"Then Judah spake unto him, saying, The man did solemnly protest unto us, ye shall not see my face, except your brother Benjamin be with you.—Unless therefore thou send him, we will not go down to Egpyt." Then Jacob said unto his sons, "Why did ye tell the man that you had a brother?" and they answered, "The man did examine us closely about our kindred, and therefore we told him, for how should we know that he would bid us fetch our brother to him?" Then Judah said very earnestly, "I pray you send the lad, that we may not all die, we and our little ones, and I will be surety for him." And Jacob said, "If it must be so, do then as you desire. But take ye the best fruits in the land, balm, and honey, and spices, and myrrh, and nuts, and almonds; and take double money in your hands, and the money that you

brought back in your sacks mouths carry again; peradventure it was an oversight. Take also your brother with you, and God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may send away your other brother, and let Benjamin return also.—If I must be bereaved of my children, there is no help for it, I must be bereaved."

Thus did the sons of Jacob depart, all of them, trembling with anxiety and fear, and using many precautions to avoid giving offence to the great person to whom they were going.

Now this, I may observe, is a picture of what sometimes happens to us. God is perhaps preparing to favour us with some great blessing, just as he was now about to favour the family of Jacob; but before he gives us possession of the blessing, he leads us through some dark and dreary path, and we fancy a great evil is coming upon us. When therefore God is opening the way to these new mercies, we hang back, and say with good old Jacob, "All these things are

againſt me." But though loth to move forward, yet what can we do? Some peril greater than that we had been dreading awaits us if we make more delay. With a heavy heart, with a complaining tongue, and with weeping eyes we ſet forward in this path, which is in fact, nevertheleſs, the path to our chief happineſs. Thus do we often quarrel with our bleſſings. And this I take it is a common caſe; for what are all our complaints but complaints againſt Providence, and do we not often murmur even at thoſe very dealings of Providence which afterwards prove the moſt remarkable for our good?

Reader, look back to your paſt life: conſider thoſe ſeaſons in it when you have been forced by neceſſity on ſome unpleaſant buſineſs, or when you have been hindered in your purſuit of ſome favourite plan, or contradicted in your opinions or your wiſhes. Now and then perhaps your ſituation in life has ſeemed quite melancholy and deſperate; miſery has appeared to threaten you on every ſide, and you have had only a

choice of evils just like these sons of Jacob, who thought they had only to chuse between a famine at home, and the dread of more ill usage in Egypt. And yet has it not afterwards proved, that God was blessing you by means of those very things which were thought at the time so terrible?

There are many persons, I am persuaded, who have even had their souls saved much in the same way in which this family of Jacob had their lives preserved. They have hung back and struggled hard for a while against those very things which have opened the way to their eternal salvation: they have been dragged from a life of sin and misery as unwillingly as ever Jacob's sons were dragged from Canaan and brought into the fruitful land of Egypt. For how unwilling are men to have their souls saved! how unwilling at least to take those means which are absolutely necessary for it! How many servants, as well as apprentices, and others are there who can hardly be persuaded to attend at public worship, or at least to

give their minds to it when they are there; and yet is not this one of the means of salvation? They must be forced to church by the authority of their masters, or by some necessity almost as urgent as that which drove the sons of Jacob from Canaan into Egypt! Again, how many children are there, who, though invited freely to a Sunday school, nevertheless hang back from going thither as much as ever the sons of Jacob hung back from going into Egypt. Perhaps too their parents have at the same time been as unwilling to part with them through some false fondness or other, as ever old Jacob was to part with his son Benjamin, though it proved afterwards to be the making of that whole family.

But let us return to the story. Joseph's brethren set off from Canaan with a great fright, as I have already told you, and they took double money in their hand, and they carried Benjamin with them, and having come down to Egypt, they stood before Joseph. Now when Joseph saw them and obser-

ved that Benjamin alſo was with them, he ordered a great dinner to be made ready, and he aſked them to come to it. And Joſeph's Brethren were afraid, on account of the money which they had carried off in their ſacks, and they got near to Joſeph's ſteward, and ſaid to him, "O! Sir, we came down hither before to buy food, and it came to paſs, that when we got to the inn on our way home, we found every man's money in his ſack's mouth, and therefore we have brought it back to you. We cannot tell who put it there, and we have now brought other money alſo, in order to buy food.—And the ſteward ſaid, Peace be to you, I had your money, and he brought Simeon out to them."

And when Joſeph came home, they drew near and offered him the preſent which they brought and bowed themſelves to the earth before him. And Joſeph aſked them of their welfare, and ſaid, "Is your father well, the old man of whom you ſpake? is he yet alive? And they anſwered, Thy ſervant our father is in good health, he is yet alive;

and they bowed down their heads again to the ground, And Joseph lifted up his eyes and saw his brother Benjamin, and said, is this your younger brother, of whom you spake to me? and then turning to the lad, "God (said he) be gracious unto thee."——Joseph now was much moved, for his bowels did yearn over his brother, and he sought where to weep, and he entered into his chamber and wept there."

Religion does not deprive men, (as some have imagined) of their natural affection and feeling, for Joseph was a religious man, and yet how did he overflow with kindness towards his Brethren. It is also remarked in the New Testament of one greater than Joseph, I mean of our Saviour, on the occasion of the death of Lazarus, that "Jesus wept." Religion regulates, no doubt, all the natural feelings of men; but it does not destroy them.

Presently afterwards the meat was set on table, and Benjamin's mess was five times as great as any other, and

they eat and drank together, and were chearful.

Now when the dinner was over, Joseph, who was still unknown to his Brethren, commanded that all their sacks should be filled with corn, and that every one's money should again be put into his sack, and moreover, that a silver cup, being Joseph's own cup should, together with the money, be put into the sack of Benjamin; and when the morning was come they all went away. And before they were got far from the city, Joseph sent his steward after them, who charged them with having stolen Joseph's cup out of the house. And they immediately denied the charge, and said vehemently, With whomsoever of us it is found, we will agree that he shall die, and that we will all of us be your slaves (or bondmen,) and a search being made, behold the cup was found in Benjamin's sack—Then they rent their clothes for grief, and laded every man his ass, and returned to the city. And Joseph said unto them, What deed is this that ye have done? And Judah

(the ſame who had promiſed Jacob that he would be ſurety for Benjamin) replied, What ſhall we ſay unto my Lord; God hath found out the iniquity of thy ſervants: Behold, we will now be bondmen to my Lord. And Joſeph ſaid, not ſo.—But he in whoſe hand the cup is found, (namely Benjamin) he ſhall be my ſlave or ſervant. But as for you, get you all away to your father in peace."

What a ſituation had theſe ſons of Jacob got into now? could any thing be more melancholy and diſtreſsful than O Jacob! Jacob!" they would ſay, "how ſhall we ever ſee thy face in peace, if we bring not back Benjamin with us. Well do we remember the words which did break forth from thee at parting with us. Joſeph is not, and Simeon is not, and now ye will take Benjamin from me."

There is one reflection to which I beg to call the minds of my readers in this place. Jacob's ſons are now accuſed unjuſtly; they are brought into trouble through no fault of theirs: whereas, formerly they had committed a great ſin, I mean that of ſelling their brother Jo-

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ſeph, and had ſuffered no particular inconveniences from it.—They had not ſuffered when they did wrong, and yet now they ſuffer for doing right; for they certainly, as I ſhould think, did right in going down to buy corn for themſelves and their aged father, and even in bringing Benjamin with them, under all the circumſtances of the caſe. Let us for a moment ſtop here and put ourſelves in the place of theſe ſons of Jacob. They might now methinks be tempted to ſay, "Surely there is no righteous governor of the world, for when we do right we only ſuffer for it, and when we did wrong we all eſcaped unpuniſhed. We will not believe therefore in a Providence: all things happen alike to all; this world is governed by chance; nay, and the chance is often in favour even of the wicked." To all ſuch profane reaſoning, if I had ſeen Joſeph's brethren at this moment of time, I would have anſwered, "Stop a little, I beſeech you; do not decide ſo haſtily, for remember your ſtory is but half over. By-and-by perhaps your innocence in the preſent matter will be cleared up, and for aught you know I

your former ſin, though long ſince committed, may come to be found out."

Let us apply this remark to ourſelves. We often ſeem to profit for a while by ſome bad thing that we have done, or at leaſt we ſuffer no preſent puniſhment. Our fraud, our lying, or our act of violence, ſucceeds for a certain time; and perhaps preſently afterwards we chance to get into trouble by doing ſomething which, on the whole, really ſeems to have been our duty. Do you never feel tempted to diſbelieve in Providence on ſuch occaſions? If you are, I would ſay to you, as I juſt now obſerved that I would have ſaid to Joſeph's brethren, Wait a while I beſeech you. Remember your ſtory is but half over. Do not decide till you obſerve the iſſue. See whether in the end you will not be ſorry for every bad thing you have ever done, and glad of every thing which, through God's grace, you have been enabled to do aright, and even though this ſhould not be the caſe now, it certainly will on the day of judgment.

(To be continued.)